

MINUTES
ST. JOHNSBURY SELECTBOARD
MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2010
6:30 PM SITE VISIT – WELCOME CENTER PARK
7:00 PM – REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING

SITE VISIT -

At 6:30p.m. the St. Johnsbury SelectBoard held a site visit in front of the St. Johnsbury Welcome Center, Depot Square. The purpose of the site visit was to review conceptual plans for improvements to the Welcome Center Park, parking lot, and Depot Square.

SelectBoard members present at the site visit: Chairperson Daniel Kimbell, Bryon Quatrini, Jim Rust, Bernard Timson, and Rodney Lamotte.

Others Present: Nat Tripp, Danny Scott, Joe Fox, Loren Godfrey, Mary Grant, Scott Beck, Darcie McCann, Joel Schwartz, and Mike Welch.

Nat Tripp explained that grant funds are currently available through the Federal Highway Administration Scenic By-Way program for projects that enhance the scenic by-way communities in terms of livability and safety. Joel Schwartz said that he has reviewed the proposed improvements with John LeBarge, the Vermont State Director, and Mr. LeBarge indicated that the work being proposed was eligible. Scott Beck, Chairperson of the St. Johnsbury Downtown Improvement Commission, said that the members of the Commission have been reviewing the conceptual plans for improvements to the park, parking lot, and Depot Square and supported these improvements. Scott said that St. Johnsbury isn't really a tourist destination – but many people travel through St. Johnsbury. Scott stated that improvements to the area in front of the Welcome Center will make the entire downtown much more appealing in terms of encouraging travelers to spend some time in Downtown St. Johnsbury.

Joel said that he has received cost estimates from engineer Tim Ruggles in the amount of \$486,000 - \$586,000. Joel said that the grant does require a 20% match – but he felt that the match could be made up from Town force accounts – and that Town forces may be allowed to charge some of their expenses to the grant. Joel said that the St. Johnsbury Public Works employees have the skills and equipment to oversee and construct a project of this scope. Joel stated that Town forces constructed the parking lot between Pearl Street and Railroad Street. Improvements would include leveling out the park, adding a stairway, improving sidewalks, replacing drainage, reconstruct roadway & parking spaces, landscaping, and replacing the park retaining wall.

Loren Godfrey, Wine Gate, stated that her family was supportive of making these improvements. Nat said that reducing traffic to one-way, and constructing bulb-outs would be an improvement in terms of pedestrian safety. Joel said that landscaping would not be an eligible component of the project – so other funds would need to be found for landscaping, or this would need to be part of the local share.

Joe Fox stated that even given the amount of trimming that he has done on the trees in the park – they really hide the building, and he felt that some of them should be removed. Darcie said that before the economic downtown 24,000 people visited the Welcome Center, last year 18,000 people stopped at the Center. Nat Tripp said that St. Johnsbury is by far the most successful visitor’s center on the Connecticut River Scenic By-Way. SelectBoard member Rodney Lamotte asked about the canopy in the rear of the building. Joel stated that is not part of the proposed improvement. Nat said that in order to accommodate the canopy, the tracks would need to be moved about 30 feet.

REGULAR MEETING -

The St. Johnsbury SelectBoard held their Regularly Scheduled SelectBoard Meeting on Monday, March 8, 2010 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Board Room in the Municipal Building.

SelectBoard Members Present: Daniel Kimbell, Jim Rust, Bryon Quatrini, Rodney Lamotte and Bernard Timson.

Others Present: Mike Welch, Sandy Grenier, Troy Ruggles, Danny Scott, Jennifer McGarvin, Mike Pelow, Kathy Pelow, Kevin Oddy, John Hall, De-Ann Welch, Lallie Mambourg, Ken Gordon, Jennifer Wallace Brodeur, Martha Hanson, Brian Christman, Gary Lunderville, Ray LaBounty Jr., Lisa Briggs, Mike Fortier, Steve Berard, Bill Gilding, Wendy Hansen, Priscilla Messier, Sean Jewell, Ryan Pelow, Lyle Gadapee, Robert Veilleux, Norm Veilleux, Annie Angell, Tim Angell, Larry Sharer, Robert Mayhew, Stan Wilkins, Laurie Stillwell, Lisa Rivers, Will Rivers, John Goodrich, Louis LaCroix, Steve Patterson, Sharon Meigs, John Wileczek, Sean Murphy, Susan Shaw, Joel Schwartz, Nat Tripp, Jim Flynn, Katrina Meigs, Werner Heidemann, Lisa Viles, Nancy Cohen, Elwood Cohen, John Nutbrown, Betty Keller, Scott Beck, Ida Rainville, Taylor Reed, Caledonian Record, and News Channel 7.

CHECK WARRANTS:

The following check warrant reports were approved and signed by the Board:

General Fund	Check #63886 – 63947	\$ 117,982.84
General Fund	Check #63948 – 63973	\$ 9,269.99
Grant Fund	Check #2238	\$ 68.43

CALL TO ORDER – Acting chairperson Daniel Kimbell called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00p.m.with the Pledge. Daniel welcomed two new members to the Board – Bernard Timson and Rodney Lamotte – and asked for nominations for Chairman.

Bernard Timson nominated Jim Rust for Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Rodney Lamotte seconded the nomination. Bryon Quatrini commented that traditionally the Chairmanship has rotated between the 3-year Board members. The Board voted two (2) in favor (Rodney Lamotte and Bernard Timson) and two (2) opposed (Bryon Quatrini and Daniel Kimbell) to the appointment of Jim Rust, ending in a tied vote. Mr. Rust abstained. Bryon Quatrini nominated Daniel Kimbell as Chairman of the Board. With no second, the nomination died. At this point Bernard Timson again put Jim Rust’s name before the Board as Chairman, seconded by Rodney Lamotte. The vote passed 3 – 1, with Bryon Quatrini voting against. Jim Rust abstained. On a motion by Jim Rust,

seconded by Bernard Timson, Daniel Kimbell was unanimously voted vice-chair. Jim Rust assumed his position as Chairman of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Chairman Rust asked if there were any comments from the audience touching any matter that was not listed on the agenda. Louis LaCroix asked the Board to look at overall budget for cuts rather than trying to cut employees in re-considering the budget for a second vote. Mr. Rust reminded the audience that there was a place on the agenda for budget discussion and asked that any other budget comments be reserved for that discussion. Ray LaBounty said that when voting for special appropriations, he was not aware that the St. J. Nutrition Center was “Meals on Wheels”, and he felt that many people made the same mistake, and did not vote in favor of the appropriation, whereas if they had realized what the vote was for, they would have voted differently. He asked the Board re-consider that particular appropriation when reviewing the budget. Jim Rust said he had heard this comment before, and agreed that the Board might re-visit that vote. There was no further public comment.

MINUTES – February 22, 2010. Jim Rust indicated he wished the minutes to be clarified in reference to the energy grant, that the Board did not receive the study until that day. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Jim Rust, the Board voted 3-0 to approve the minutes as amended by Mr. Rust. Mr. Lamotte and Mr. Timson abstained from the vote, since they were not on the Board at the time the minutes were written.

RULES OF PROCEDURE/CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICIES - On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to re-adopt the written Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest policies. On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the tentative schedule of regular SelectBoard meetings as presented.

ST. JOHNSBLURY ATHENAEUM SUPPORT – Wendy Hansen asked the Board for written support of the Athenaeum’s application for a USDA Rural Development grant to restore the skylight in the Gallery of the Athenaeum. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Rodney Lamotte, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the Chairman to sign a statement on behalf of the Board in support of the project.

WEIDMANN PROJECT – John Goodrich was present to request the support of the Board in Weidmann’s possible application for \$50 Million to update the equipment at the Weidmann plant. Mr. Goodrich indicated that this would not impact the buildings or surrounding area – but would upgrade their manufacturing facility. Mr. Goodrich told the Board that Weidmann had been responsible for pumping \$7 Million into the State of Vermont in 2009, and had paid approximately \$1 Million in taxes to the Town of St. Johnsbury in the last 5 years, as well as providing 280 jobs. John Goodrich indicated the company will need the update to the facility to solidify their position in St. Johnsbury. Mr. Goodrich also addressed the water situation, because it had been reported that Weidmann would be switching their water usage from town water to their pond water, pending testing of the pond water. There was major concern of this scenario because Weidmann is one of the highest water users on the system, and costs would have to be absorbed by all other users. Mr. Goodrich assured the Board that, even with the use of pond water, the company will continue to use 30 – 40% of their current amount of water from the Town system.

On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Rodney Lamotte, the Board voted 3-1 to sign the VEDA 4A form in support of Weidmann’s application for funding. Bryon Quatrini recused himself from the vote.

DEPOT PARK IMPROVEMENTS – SCENIC BY-WAY GRANT – Joel Schwartz, Nat Tripp and Scott Beck presented information on proposed improvements that could be made to the Depot Park and Welcome Center through a Connecticut River Scenic By-Way Grant. Joel indicated the grants had become available in February, and there was a limited time period they could be applied for. Several people expressed concerns about taking on more grants, and how much it could cost the Town. Joel Schwartz indicated the project could cost approximately \$500,000, with the Town's portion being a 20%, or \$100,000 match. The match could be in-kind work, with the highway department possibly doing much of the work. The bottom line being, an application would have to be made before knowing how much the grant might be and how much would be required from the Town. Mr. Schwartz also emphasized that by applying for the grant, the Town is not obligated to use the funds, but without applying, there would be no chance of getting any funding from this round of grants.

Most of the questions concerning the grant application centered on the safety of the park and Welcome Center area after construction, the cost of applying and whether or not the Town would be locked into taking the funds if they were awarded. There was also a question on some grant funded projects that have not been completed, to which Mike Welch replied that these projects are in the process of being completed and winding down. The grant funds in the current instance would be allocated during 2011, and would not be included in the 2010 budget, so the Town would have plenty of time to decide whether or not to accept the funds and obligate the Town to the project. Most of the questions came from Lisa Briggs, Nancy Cohen, and Gary Lunderville in the audience, and financial concerns from Board members Rodney Lamotte and Bernard Timson, questioning the cost of application and if the Town would be locked into the project by applying. Joel Schwartz and Steve Patterson from NVDA assured the Board the application process would not lock the Town into any obligation. Mike Welch pointed out that much of the work in the proposal would need to be addressed in the next few years, with the retaining wall beginning to give way, and this grant opportunity could assist with necessary repairs. On a motion from Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to support and apply for the Scenic By-Way grant funds.

AARP COMPLETE STREETS INITIATIVE – Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur from AARP in Burlington, spoke to the Board on AARP's support of the 3-Rivers Transportation Path and how important it is for the Town to continue projects that will assist in transportation of all its citizens and help support and encourage physical activity and exercise. Ms Wallace-Brodeur tried to clarify H-741 – Complete Streets Bill – that serves to encourage towns to make roadways and other pathways more accessible to citizens. John Wilczek commented that he would like to see the sidewalks cleared of snow to make walking easier in the winter. Laurel Ruggles of the NVRH Fit & Healthy Coalition challenged the Board to be the community leaders to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

GENERAL FUND BUDGET REVIEW – Mike Welch indicated he would like to see an amended budget ready for voting as soon as possible. April 6 the Father Lively Center would be available for use if the budgets were ready for vote. Lisa Rivers, representing the School Board, said the School Board has not had their organizational meeting yet, and they have two new people on the Board, so she did not know how soon they could have a revised budget ready for vote. Sandy Grenier noted that it would be cheaper for the Town to hold the vote on both budgets at one time. Daniel Kimbell reviewed the General Budget and noted that several departments are represented there, and the Board would like to know exactly what people were voting against on Town Meeting day. There were several comments and suggestions from the audience and several who spoke in support of various Town Departments.

- Bob South – Resurrect the Finance Committee? It would depend on the time frame.
- Tina Wood – Concerned about attitude of the new SelectBoard members about the Fire Department. Would like to have them become more familiar with the department’s activities before trying to cut it back too far.
- Priscilla Messier (Zoning Administrator) invited people to come into the office and see how departments actually work.
- John Goodrich – Suggested employing a balanced approach without cutting individuals. Also suggested to continue making the town more attractive to citizens and visitors.
- John Hall – Spoke in support of Economic Development office, giving a history of its development back to the early 1990’s, through his tenure as Town Manager, pointing out the many projects that have been accomplished with the assistance of the Economic Development office and especially Joel Schwartz.
- Steve Patterson – Echoed comments by John Hall.
- Stan Wilkins – Stated that people should be aware that 2/3 of the tax rate is for schools, and if the Town’s General budget is cut by \$300,000, it will not make as big a difference in people’s taxes as they may think.
- Scott Beck – Dislikes the grant process and as a member of the Downtown community and a business owner he is glad there is someone like Joel Schwartz to handle the applications. He feels there should be an over-all belt tightening, not drastic cuts in services.
- Betty Keller – Concern over the amount spent in Health Care Benefits – approximately \$800,000 per year. Ms. Keller said the VLCT supports a single payer health system, and the Town should support it.
- Rodney Lamotte questioned Mike Welch about the current plan the employees have and could they look at a higher deductible to lower the premiums. Mr. Welch agreed that would be a point of consideration in the current negotiations.
- Lisa Viles – Agreed with Betty Keller – look at future expenses and move carefully.
- Mike Fortier – Suggested all Department Heads look at their budgets and cut a certain percentage across the board.
- Nancy Cohen – Said Tom Lovett said his teachers at the Academy had taken reduced pay three years in a row and they are receiving less in benefits. Tuition is at \$13,875, which is less than some of the surrounding towns. St. J. Academy teachers sitting nearby said the Academy had not taken pay cuts in the last three years. Nancy Cohen continued to point out that many people she knew had taken as much as 10% pay cuts in the last year, and she also felt the recent reappraisal was not equitable, that the Downtown properties had been treated “kindly”.
- Brian Christman said he thought some of the benefits should be taken away from the Town employees.
- Louis LaCroix – Asked the Board to not reduce essential services – pointed out that if the Town tried to replace the career fire department with a volunteer department (for instance) he thought people’s fire insurance could increase as much as \$100 or \$125 per year. He personally would rather pay that much in taxes.
- Jim Rust – Agreed that the entire budget needs to be reviewed.
- Bernard Timson – Apologized to the Fire Department for the way his remarks appeared in the Caledonian Record. But he did say that the people who elected him were also concerned with the amount of time spent by the Fire Department on medical calls.

The Board set the first budget meeting for March 10 at 6:00p.m. at the Welcome Center for more room.

APPOINTMENTS - Priscilla Messier reported that Robert Mayhew and Jim Rust resigned from the Development Review Board, and Pam Smart and Kevin Oddy indicated they both wished to move from the Planning Commission to the DRB, which would leave three vacancies on the Planning Commission because Stan Wilkins had also retired from that Board.

Priscilla said that right now the Planning Commission is working on the Town Plan. Kevin Oddy and Pam Smart are both working on the Town Plan and will continue to do so. They both offered to do double duty until their replacements can be found for the Planning Commission.

Mike Welch said that Jeff Briggs did not want to continue in the position of Tree Warden, and Gary Reis had also declined re-appointment to the St. Johnsbury Executive Development Board because of his time commitment to the Legislature.

On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Rodney Lamotte, the Board voted unanimously to make the following appointments for 2010:

Town Service Officer	Michael Welch	1 Year
Homeland Security	Troy Ruggles	1 Year
Energy Coordinator	William Christiansen	1 Year
Town Planning Commission:		
	Tim Angell	4 Year
	Bob South	4 Year
	Susan Cherry	4 Year
Development Review Board:		
	Kevin Oddy (complete Mayhew's)	1 Year
	Pam Smart	3 Year
	Richard Lyon	3 Year
Recreation Board:		
	Al Dunn	3 Year
	Dale Urie	3 Year
Industrial Park Board		
	Reginald Wakeham	2 Year
Tax Stabilization Committee		
	Jack Byrne	3 Year
	Ann Laferriere	1 Year
	Edwin Magnus	1 Year
	Alex Clouatre	4 Year
St. Johnsbury/Lyndon		
Revolving Loan Fund	Reginald Wakeham	2 Year
	Don Bostic	3 Year
Downtown Improvement District		
	Scott Beck	5 Year
	Amy South	5 Year

SELECTION COMMITTEE – PORTLAND STREET BRIDGE – CONSTRUCTION

SERVICES – Mike Welch reported that he needed a representative from the SelectBoard to serve on the Selection Committee to review proposals for the Portland Street Bridge construction project. Bernard Timson volunteered to serve.

WEST SIDE PROJECT UPDATE – Mike Welch updated the Board on the first phase of the West Side project – Hastings Hill – is ready for bid.

MANAGER’S REPORT – Mike Welch brought the new members of the Board up to speed on the process of approving the town warrants list – previously the Board had authorized one individual to review all checks between meetings, and then sign the warrants at the meetings. Daniel Kimbell pointed out that there will be several sub-committees to be formed and appointments to be made from the Board of Selectmen, and suggested that process be postponed until next meeting. It was generally agreed that Daniel Kimbell will continue in this role for the moment.

Mr. Welch reported that one section of employees has not been addressed in the change over to the VMERS pension plan. Contracts written with the Police and Public Works Departments indicate that any employees hired after January 1, 2010, will be eligible to join a Pension Plan, but will be included in the VMERS Plan, not the Town Pension Plan. Police personnel will be eligible for the Plan C; Public Works eligible for Plan B. Mike Welch told the Board that the non-union employees have not been addressed in signing up for the VMERS plan rather than the Town Pension Plan, so he needed to have the SelectBoard vote on a formal request for any newly hired non-union employee to be added onto the VMERS Plan B. On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to sign the following:

We the undersigned members of the St. Johnsbury SelectBoard do hereby respectfully request that any employees who would otherwise be eligible for participation in the Town of St. Johnsbury Pension Plan, and who are not members of one of the employee bargaining units – be allowed to join VMERS Group B, with the employer and the employee each contributing the amounts recommended in the Group B plan description.

Mr. Welch reviewed an invoice from the St. Johnsbury School for the Recreation Department use of the school space. The Board questioned Joe Fox if he had considered this amount in his budget for the year, which he had not. Joe Fox indicated he felt this was fair because of the hours he uses the facility for recreation activities throughout the week and weekend during non-school hours. He also offers his time and expertise to the School. Both the Board and Joe Fox indicated they would like to see a more itemized summary of charges in the next invoice.

Mike Welch asked for an executive session to discuss a civil court matter. On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at approximately 9:20p.m. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Rodney Lamotte, the Board voted unanimously to return to regular session, and voted to adjourn at approximately 9:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ida W. Rainville
Executive Secretary